

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 04728 201534Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

SCCT-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 /047 W

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O R 201502Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6399
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
() Release () Exclude () Deny

Exemption(s): _____
Declassify: () In Part () In Full DECLASSIFIED
() Classify as _____ () Extend as _____ () Downgrade to _____
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 4728

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, AR
SUBJECT: SANTUCHO, OTHER TOP ERP LEADERS ALLEGEDLY KILLED BY
SECURITY FORCES

1. MARIO ROBERTO SANTUCHO AND ENRIQUE GORRIARAN MERLO, RESPECTIVELY THE NUMBER ONE AND TWO TOP LEADERS OF THE OUTLAWED PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY (ERP), WERE ALLEGEDLY KILLED YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (JULY 19) IN A JOINT ARMY AND POLICE RAID ON A SUBVERSIVE HIDEOUT NEAR LA PLATA. IN A LATER JOINT OPERATION, ANOTHER FIVE EXTREMISTS, ALSO ALLEGED TO BE ERP LEADERS, WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED. THE INCIDENTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN OFFICIALLY CONFIRMED, ALTHOUGH KEY NEWSMEN TELL US POLICE HAVE PRIVATELY CONFIRMED THE DEATH OF THE TWO SUBVERSIVE LEADERS. THE STORY WAS CARRIED IN MOST BUENOS AIRES NEWSPAPERS AND NEWS AGENCIES, BUT IN THE CONDITIONAL TENSE. THE ONLY INFORMATION IN THE ARMY COMMUNIQUE ISSUED LAST NIGHT WAS THAT AN ARMY CAPTAIN HAD BEEN KILLED DURING THE SHOOTOUT.

2. COMMENT: DEATHS OF SANTUCHO AND MERLO, OPERATIVE AND INTELLECTUAL HEADS OF ERP, WOULD BE A SEVERE BLOW TO THE

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 1

UNCLASSIFIED

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Current Class: [REDACTED]
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Page: 2

Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200000044

[REDACTED]
PAGE 02 BUENOS 04728 201534Z

ALREADY HARD-HIT ERP SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENT. HOWEVER, MASSIVE RETALIATION BORN OF DESPERATION IS A POSSIBILITY IN THE IMMEDIATE SHORT TERM. STRIPPED OF ITS TOP LEADERSHIP, ERP MAY SPEED UP A REPORTED MERGER WITH THE STILL FORMIDABLE MONTONEROS, WHO HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN ERP IN RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS AND AVOIDING HEAVY LOSSES BY ARGENTINE SECURITY FORCES. EVEN SO, SANTUCHO'S DEATH WOULD BE AN ENORMOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST TO MILITARY AND POLICE.
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Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 2

UNCLASSIFIED